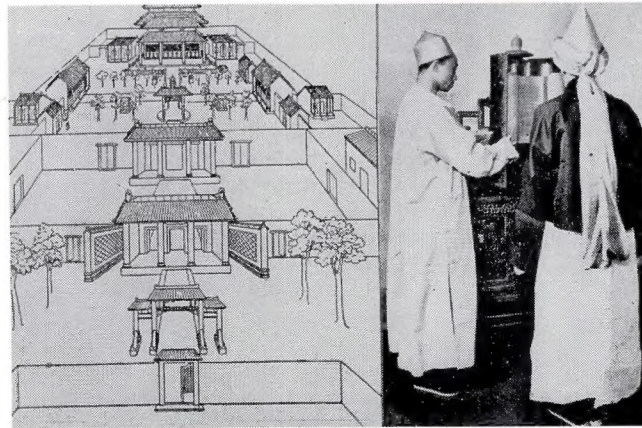


WORLD JEWRY

The variety of Jews in the world is so great and so amazing that it seems hardly believable that differences among them are so wide; one wonders what really brings them in the classification of Jew. Many of the Judaic languages are employed by them to this day include: Ladin, Yiddish, Amharic, Tamil, Aramaic, Judeo-Arabic, Dzagati, Uzbek, etc. Hebrew has been the sacred language and a type of "Lengua Franca" for many but not all. In religious matters about four subjects will be of universal commonness: The oneness of God, The Old Testament, Circumcision and the Sabbath (Saturday). With that for the most part and in various shades of degrees all similarities end. We will follow up with thumb-nail sketches of a very few types of Jews. The list is vast.

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Chinese Jews (T'ai Chin Chiao)



The Chinese-Jewish Temple at K'ai Fung Foo and the reading of the Torah (The Law, Old Testament). The readers wore turbans as do the Chinese Moslem priests. (Fotos Courtesy the Jewish Museum, New York).

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Historians claim that Jews settled in K'aifeng, Honan, on the Yellow (Hwagho) River, during the Han Dynasty, two centuries before the Christian Era, and that they got there from Persia. The Chinese called them "T'ai Chin Chiao—those who extract the sinews. At their zenith this group numbered 6,000 souls. They became a highly respected group and received many favors from the Mandarins. Documents of honors bestowed upon the Jews are in existence. In 1163 a large synagogue was built which was enlarged and beautified in 1279. They adopted Chinese customs, dress, names and language, but they prayed in Hebrew. The synagogue was called "Ching Chen Ssu—The Great Synagogue". Due to their isolation complete assimilation finally set in. During the last few centuries decline set in and that once prosperous community became poor, and the great synagogue was taken over by Christian missionaries.

Mexican Indian Jew

In Mexico there are about 300 Nahuo (Aztec) Indians living in Del Valle, a suburb of Mexico City, and the village of Venta Prieta, 60 miles from Mexico City. These Indians observe a form of Sefardic Judaism. It is believed that they are descendants of Marranos who intermarried with the native Indians, or of servants of Marranos who accepted Judaism.

Beney Israel - Shanvar Telis



Hindu Jews (Beney Israel—Children of Israel). At right Mrs. H. Sen, Calcutta, a leader of all Hindu Women's organization, and headed many government delegations to foreign countries. To Left a Beney Israel family in the Konkan district near Bombay. (Pictures from India).

The black, brown and white Jews of India settled there as early as the fifth century of the Christian Era and no later than the sixteenth century, according to their oral tradition they settled here during the times of King David and Solomon. The earliest migration and native converts make up the black and brown castes. To this group belong the Cochins of South India. The white Jews are of Hispano-Portuguese extraction who reached India after the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. All of these Jews adopted the Hindu language of the locality (Tamil in the South Marathi around Bombay and Karachi and Malayalam on the Eastern Coast). They also adopted customs, dress, etc., and retained essential forms of Judaism.

The first recorded historic movement of Jews to India took place during 440-490 when the Zarathustrian Magi of Persia forced Jews to convert, while children were forcefully taken from the parents to rear them as Persians. A group of Jews under Joseph Rabanan left for Malabar. Eravi, a Brahmin King of Cranganor, gave them special privileges which are still preserved on copper plates in the Tamil language. Tradition has it that seventy-two successors followed Joseph Rabanan and during that era the Jews lived in peace and under a condition which resembled an independent principality.

A war which destroyed Cranganor saw the slaughter of many Jews. Many fled and settled in Mattachory, Cochin, Southwest India, and in Ceylon. A traveler of that period, Petakhya, found 23,000 Jews living in Ceylon alone. Others who visited those Jews were Judah Halevi in the eleventh century. Abraham Ibn-Ezra in the twelfth century, and Rabenu Nissem in the fourteenth century.

A sixteenth century account relates that, when the Portuguese armies fought the Raja of Vatakenkur in 1550, they had planned to assault the Hindus on a Saturday, but the Raja protested that the Jews would not fight and that they "were the best warriors he had raised." The Raja of Chochin and the Zamorin of Calcutta also had Jewish brigades.

There are approximately 10,000 Jews of the original Beney Israel stock concentrated mainly in Cochin, Poona, Bombay, Karachi, and Calcutta.

Besides the Beney Israel and the Cochins Jews, next in length of residence are the Sefardic Jews who settled there in the sixteenth century. They have a synagogue in Cochin which was built in 1568. Then there are the "Brown Jews", who, it is believed, are descendants of servants in the employment of the Sefardim who accepted Judaism.

With the nineteenth century Iraqi Jews began to come to India, while since 1933, German and other European Jews started arriving. The Iraqi Jews are the most influential. Best known among them is the Sasoon family. The Iraqi Jews are the merchant class as are the Sefardim. The Black and Brown Jews are the farm and labor class, while the German Jews are the professionals. The caste system is observed by those as strictly as by the Brahmin Hindus.

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Yemenite - Arab Jews



Yemenite Types. The girl's headgear, most of which is hidden beneath the shawl, is very elaborate, sewn with many beads and coins. (Pictures courtesy Isreali Legation, New York).

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Many Jews had lived on the Arabian Peninsula along the Coast of the Red Sea since times immemorial. They lived as independent sovereign tribes in certain areas, and being ruled by their own Shaikhs each claimed a certain age in antiquity of their migration. Those who resided in Hedjas around Yathrib (Medina) claimed descent from settlers since the times of King Saul; those who settled in Yemen claimed residence since the times of King David; while those who lived in Northern Arabia claimed migration during the period of the destruction of the first Temple.

All Arab Jews had only one thing in common—religion, which they observed even with greater strictness than their brethren in Israel. Their life otherwise was identical with that of the Arabs. They were a warrior-like people, had feuds even with their own coreligionists, loved poetry, and pursued the type of life the Arabs did. Only one other thing (besides religion) distinguished them from the Arabs—their ability to read and write, and they were therefore called by the Arabs "Ahl ul Kitab", The Nation of Script.

The Jews and Arabs lived in utmost harmony and often a Jew held the chieftaincy over some Arabic tribe. Both claimed descent from Patriarch Abraham, the Jews through Isaac and the Arabs through Ishmael. Since the Arabs likewise practiced circumcision, conversion to Judaism was frequent. About the year 500 C. E. the Yemenite king, Abu Kariba Assad Tobban, was also converted to Judaism, along with many of his subjects. He was a war-like king and was forever battling, and soon lost his life. He was succeeded by his son, Zorah Yussuf Dhu-Novas, who likewise loved battle (520-530). When he heard of the persecution of the Jews suffered at the hands of the Byzantine Christians, he determined to avenge the wrongs. Many Christian merchants were wont to pass Yemen on their way to India to import spices, perfumes, and items not available in the Christian domains. Dhu-Novas spread ter-

ror among the merchants and caused the decline of trade with India. Incited by Bishop Simon of Syria, Emperor Justin I of Byzantium obtained the service of the Negus of Ethiopia to war on Yemen. The Negus (Atzbash), whose kingdom faced Yemen on the opposite side of the Red Sea, was anxious for the crown of Yemen. With little persuasion and reinforced with ships and an additional army supplied by the Byzantines, he invaded Yemen which was destroyed and thousands of Jews slain.

Toward the end of the sixth century a new prophet in the person of Mohamed arose. He was born in Mecca. He was an idealist and easily impressed by the happenings around him. He was brought up under Jewish influence, and the influential cousin of his wife was a convert to Judaism. Therefore, it is no wonder that the new religion he proclaimed bore close relationship to Judaism. He proclaimed the Oneness (Anti-Trinity) of God, which is also the article of faith of Judaism. The best teachings of the Koran were taken from the Jewish Bible and Talmud. Mohamed was in close association with the Jews. His scribe and many of his soldiers were Jews. He, therefore, desiring that the Jews should accept his teaching, adopted many Jewish customs, turning toward Jerusalem when praying as well as the celebration of the Day of Atonement (Ashura-Yom Kippur). The Jews who are not easily awed by "prophets" not only rejected him but ridiculed him greatly. He felt helpless to defend himself and waited for an opportune moment to revenge the ridicule of the Jews. After the victorious battle of Bedr (624) which gave him courage, he set out to take revenge.

First all he eliminated some Jewish customs from the Koran, abolishing the Ashura (Day of Atonement), and substituted it with the month of Ramadhan which was observed by the Arabs for centuries before Mohammed's time. He also directed to turn toward Mecca during the prayers. In the Koran he inserted a lengthy anti-Jewish Sura (chapter).

Mohammed led his army against the various Jewish fortifications, one at a time. Since there was no mutual assistance understanding among the various Jewish tribes, he was able to uproot them and vanquish them. Many were banished to other places, others fled. Mohammed died in 632.

The lot of the Yemenite Jews of the last centuries was a miserable one, worsening with each succeeding year. When the new State of Israel was created, nearly all Yemenite Jews were transferred to Israel through the famous airplane lifts "Operation Flying Carpet". While in Yemen they created a rich folklore in every phase, the dance, song, prayer chant, liturgy ritual, custom, costume, legend, etc. They are excellent metalurgists and proficient in other handicraft. They are Arabic speaking Jews.

Kurdish Jews

These were originally mountain Jews living in the Caucasian, Azerbaijan and Kurdistan Mountain. They now live in the cities of Northeastern Irak and Northwestern Iran (formerly Kurdistan). They are the only Jews whose mother tongue is Aramaic. Once during the era of Jesus and for some centuries after this was the everyday language of the Jews. The Talmud Babli is written partly in Aramaic, as well as other books of the Bible and the Onkelos.

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